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property into political power" (page 187). In a chapter on "The party as a formulator of principles and policies" is a valuable discussion of the true significance and composition of platforms, and emphasis is again laid upon the heterogeneous interests, impulses, and ideas which cause men to align themselves under one standard or the other in the American bi-party system. It is also made clear that the party is but one of many competing agencies in the formulation of public policy. Three chapters deal with the more mechanical aspects of the party system, treating of nominations, elections, and appointments. These aim to present general principles and tendencies rather than details. The author then examines the various theories and interpretations of the party system which have been advanced by other students of the problem and presents in some detail his own ideals of the nature and function of parties, the general purport of which has been mentioned. In a final chapter are discussed "Tendencies toward party reconstruction," which are of three general types. The first of these includes what may be called the mechanism of political reform, such as the merit system in civil service, the short ballot, direct primaries, and the like. Professor Merriam recognizes that such schemes alone are powerless to work our political redemption. A second group of influences in the realm of social and economic relations is at work producing organizations and groups which compete with political parties and which will tend to weaken the grip of the boss and the old-type machine. Here must be reckoned the movements tending in the direction of industrial democracy. Finally there are those subtler influences which the author terms political *mores*. Herein lies our chief hope of release from the grip of the present system. The real political education of the people is in its infancy, but from its development is to be expected an elevation in the whole tone of our political life. The author closes, however, with the final caution that we cannot hope to reform the party system more rapidly than we clarify the political thought and purify the social ethics of the people.

ROBERT E. CUSHMAN

A history of the United States since the civil war. In five volumes.

Volume II: 1868-1872. By Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer. (New York:

The Macmillan company, 1922. 614 p. \$4.00)

The recent death of William A. Dunning gives new point to this volume of Mr. Oberholtzer's exhaustive work covering the years dominated by the political reconstruction of the south. For the view of Dunning, that inspired his students for a generation, is here set down. The *Columbia university monographs* have been an endless source for Dr. Oberholtzer; and there has been close kinship because of the agreement

that these years are the end of an epoch — instead of the beginning. Some other writer will one day picture, in as accurate detail as this, the American history of Fish and Phillips, rebuilding the new south as a part of a new nation. There will be no better survey of the standard facts of the era than Mr. Oberholtzer has given.

The four years that are unfolded leisurely throughout this volume are terribly depressing as here displayed. Scandal and malice, incompetence, low ideals, and lower taste are revealed on nearly every page. The high exaltation of war time was followed by a slump in the spirit and personnel of politics. Grant, the war hero, precariously trod the margins that separate honesty and impropriety. His associates, many of them with cynical words in their mouths, rioted in graft and speculation. The victorious party, heir to the war spirit of Lincoln and having no rival with an unstained past, lowered itself to the impeachment of Andrew Johnson and the building of factional political machines. Seven of the eight chapters of this volume deal with this unsavory mess. The eighth selects the Union Pacific railroad as the single non-political topic for extended treatment. The proportions are much the same as those of Rhodes, who gives about 450 pages to the years to which Mr. Oberholtzer allots 614.

The treatment of the greenback movement may be taken for illustration of the author's point of view. Most competent scholars are in agreement that the greenback philosophy was wrong-headed, and would have entailed economic injury to the whole United States as well as a repudiation of sacred obligations. It is not enough, however, for the historian to pass this judgment. To Mr. Oberholtzer greenbackism seems to be a kind of original sin, deliberately chosen by its advocates because it was dishonest. "Herein," he says (page 160), "agitators, seeking to gain the favor and applause of ignorant elements in the population, found their opportunity." He goes on to speak of "men of little property" urged forward by others for "unworthy ends." He fails either to see or to picture the economic entanglements of the south and west that emphasized for these regions the cost entailed by sound finance, and that made it possible for men otherwise intelligent and sincere to convince themselves that greenbacks were consistent with expediency and honor. The kind of history that Professor Buck has written and is writing has failed its mark in Mr. Oberholtzer. Similarly illustrative of the conventionalism of the volume is the fact that it contains no mention of trade unionism or the granger movement, whereas in the first administration of Grant both of these economic forces were diverting political currents from their normal channels, and shaping new ones. Undoubtedly some of these topics have been reserved for treatment in

the next volume, but that postponement leaves the story one-sided and incomplete. There are historians who believe that the beginnings of industrial society in the United States in the years 1865-1873 are in sheer importance more weighty than all the details of reconstruction. One of the great factors in the collapse of political morale that Mr. Oberholtzer so clearly shows, was a deliberate turning of the people from politics to other sorts of social organization as a means of working out their problems. The political history that was vital in the period 1840-1860 ceases to explain the United States after the civil war. And increasingly since that event the historian who would picture America and its motivation must broaden his canvas and increase his themes.

From the point of view that Mr. Oberholtzer has preferred to take, the work is executed with caution, moderation, industry, and fresh scholarship. The new facts and sources hitherto unused serve in most cases to confirm conclusions already reached and widely accepted. In his detailed pictures of men and motives he reaches the highest planes of his historical synthesis. When he presents general principles he is somewhat less successful. If he proceeds with his work at his present pace it is hard to believe that he will not need twelve volumes, instead of the five that he has promised.

FREDERIC L. PAXSON

Life of Roger Brooke Taney, chief justice of the United States supreme court. By Bernard C. Steiner. (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins company, 1922. 553 p. \$5.00)

When Chief Justice Taney died in 1864 contemporary opinion, outside of the few who knew and appreciated the truly admirable qualities of the man, connected his name with the Dred Scott decision and its bearing on the controversy which was then merged in the great struggle between the sections. To-day as then it is undoubtedly the nullification of the provision in the Missouri organic act, forbidding slavery in a portion of the Louisiana purchase, which comes to mind when Taney is remembered and, with a large proportion of those to whom the name means anything, little or nothing else is recalled. By presenting a painstaking and impartial account of this really important personage Mr. Steiner has performed a service worthy of attention. Nothing valuable as a biography has hitherto been available, for Samuel Tyler's volume, published in 1872, can stand merely as an example of the prevailing eulogistic "life" of the period.

The work in its first two chapters covers Taney's life down to the time he was admitted to the bar in Calvert county, Maryland, and then proceeds chronologically for the most part to treat of him as a member of the Maryland house of delegates, as a lawyer in Calvert county,